

Sirhan's Fate to Set Pattern For U.S. Political Assassins

LOS ANGELES (UPI) — The prosecution in the trial of convicted murderer Sirhan B. Sirhan will tell the jury it is up to them to decide what happens to political assassins in the United States.

"We have no precedent in this country for what the appropriate penalty should be for political assassins," chief prosecutor Lynn Compton told newsmen yesterday, minutes after the jury found Sirhan guilty of first degree murder in the death of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy.

The trial is in recess through the weekend. The penalty phase, which gets under way Monday at 9:30 a.m., is expected to last no longer than one and one-half days.

Neither side was expected to call any witnesses.

Compton said the prosecution would not ask directly for the death sentence, but would tell the jurors their consciences must be their guides in determining if Sirhan gets life imprisonment or death in San Quentin's gas chamber.

The jury will have to decide the proper punishment for political assassins," Compton said. "I have said on many occasions that I don't think it is appropriate for me personally to express an opinion as to what the penalty should be."

The panel of seven men and five women reached its verdict after nearly 17 hours of deliberations.

The jurors interrupted their discussions only once to return to the courtroom late Wednesday for a clarification of the judge's instructions concerning second degree murder.

The request triggered speculation that at least one juror had held out for the lesser charge.

Sirhan took the verdict stoically, staring straight ahead, but his attorneys said he was disappointed.

Yesterday afternoon, when the defense appeared before Superior Court Judge Herbert V. Walker to present three motions concerning the penalty phase of the trial, Sirhan seemed in good spirits, laughing and whispering to attorney Russell Parsons.

He exclaimed, "beautiful," when chief defense lawyer Grant B. Cooper said Sirhan wanted experts on the

Assassin's Father Hurts Vengeance Threat at U.S.

TAIYEBEH, Occupied Jordan (AP) — The father of Sirhan Bishara Sirhan, convicted killer of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, today swore "revenge on American politicians" if his son is executed.

"The revenge won't be in words," Bishara Sirhan declared. He did not elaborate.

"I accept the fact that my son killed Senator Kennedy," he said. "But Senator Kennedy was to blame. He provoked my son by threatening to supply arms to the Middle East which would have caused the death of thousands and the displacement of many more."

"My son did well," said the 55-year-old Arab.

Many Americans have come to my house and told me they were happy to get rid of Kennedy," he added.

Sirhan vituperatively attacked deputy prosecutor David Fitts, cursing him in Arab expletives and charging "he would not let my son defend himself."

"My son, as a true Christian like myself, is ready to work for peace, not only in words but from all his heart," said Sirhan. He said executing the youth would achieve nothing "because peace lovers will never surrender."

Arab-Israeli conflict to corroborate the tales of terror he and his mother told on the witness stand about their lives in Old Jerusalem before they came to the United States.

Walker denied the motion on grounds the evidence would be irrelevant unless the witnesses knew first-hand of Sirhan's personal experiences.

Walker also denied a defense request to permit former San Quentin Warden Clinton Duffy and others to testify that the death penalty is no deterrent against murder, and to allow the defense to present evidence to the jury that the prosecution once agreed to a life sentence.

Cooper had asked to call Dist. Atty. Evelle Younger to tell the jury of a session in the judge's chambers before the trial began, when Sirhan, his attorneys, and the prosecution agreed he would plead guilty to first degree murder and be sentenced to life imprisonment.

Walker rejected the plea bargaining because he believed the public had a right to have the whole story aired, he said. He told the defense yesterday California statutes prohibit evidence regarding plea bargaining to be presented to the jury.

However, Compton said the

bargaining would prevent the prosecution from asking outright for the death penalty.

"I think it imposes on us the obligation not to say the death penalty is an absolute must, since we have conceded otherwise in the past," Compton said.

Dep. Dist. Atty. John Howard said the prosecution would stress Sirhan's apparent lack of remorse and would ask the jury to consider "the effect on the democratic process of political assassinations."

"I can't imagine any jury hearing this case and not considering that the motive for the crime was political assassination," Howard said.

The defense will ask the jury to reconsider psychiatric testimony that Sirhan was mentally crippled and unable to consider the consequences of his actions.

"Obviously we don't think the death penalty is proper," Cooper said. "This is the act of a sick mind."

Cooper had no regrets about the psychiatric angle used by the defense.

"I don't know of any other way we could have tried it," he said. "We did the best we could and we lost. That's all."